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February 11, 2013

The Honorable Michael B. Donley
Secretary of the Air Force
General Mark A. Welsh
Chief of Staff
Department of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Donley and General Welsh,

Consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we formally request the United States Air Force to expand the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposal to relocate the 18th Aggressor Squadron from Eielson Air Force Base (EAFB) to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) to include an additional study alternative: retain the 18th Aggressor Squadron at EAFB and instead relocate the 24 F-16 aircraft and associated personnel of the 480th Fighter Squadron from Spangdahlem Air Force Base in Germany to become part of the 354th Fighter Wing at EAFB.

To ensure that the full range of issues associated with the EIS is complete, this alternative must be added, given that the premise for the proposed action is associated with "the current changing geopolitical environment and changing fiscal circumstances" as noted in Section 1.1 (Introduction) of United States Air Force (USAF) Draft Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives for this EIS.

The addition of this study alternative with the EIS will:

- Eliminate operational costs of two single Squadron Wings, created by the recently approved USAF Force Structure Adjustments, by consolidating the two F-16 Squadrons at EAFB. Spangdahlem would be retained in a "warm base" status to support Ramstein Air Force Base (AFB) requirements (much as USAF proposes in its Alternative 1 which would result in the warm basing of EAFB with the movement of the F-16s to JBER).
- Reduce costs to the Air Force by reducing overseas basing costs in Germany (while retaining a capable F-16 presence for US Air Forces, Europe (USAFE) in Aviano, Italy).
- Leverage the benefits of USAF's planned expansion of the Joint Pacific Air Range (JPARC) adjacent to Eielson for the benefit of the 480th Fighter Squadron. This Squadron currently must travel to ranges much further from Spangdahlem to conduct training; thus, consolidation will create enhanced readiness to the Squadron and reduce flying hour costs to access ranges for training.

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- Support the updated National Military Strategy (which includes a renewed focus on the Asia/Pacific rim), while retaining the ability of the additional F-16s to deploy to the Pacific or to Europe as a supplemental capability to the 31st Fighter Wing (Aviano) to meet USAFE requirements, while returning EAFB to the deployment status it had prior to 2007.
- Mitigate the socio-economic impacts of USAF's Alternative 1 and enhance Alaskan Command (and international training with our allies) by adding the capabilities of the 480ths F-16 Block 50 aircraft into EAFB/JPARC airspace where airspace management, air quality, and noise issues will be within the confines of levels previously experienced there (when the 354th Fighter Wing operated both F-16s and A-10s through 2007).
- Reduce the costs of overseas basing by placing Spangdahlem in a warm base status while retaining a Forward Operating Location presence to support Ramstein / USAFE air mobility requirements. This would also be consistent with the position of the Secretary of Defense with regard to reducing overseas infrastructure costs.

The State of Alaska highly values the presence of the Department of Defense, along with the service of military service members stationed here and throughout the world. We appreciate that austerity measures are required in the current fiscal climate. In this regard, we are confident that the addition of the proposed alternative to USAF's EIS, which examines relocation of the 480th Fighter Squadron to EAFB as a complement to the 18th Aggressor Squadron, is consistent with NEPA, as well as with the Department's fiscal and operational objectives for the USAF.

I look forward to your confirmation that the Alternative to study relocation of the 480th Fighter Squadron to EAFB, with the retention of the 18th Aggressor Squadron at EAFB, will be included in the Department's Draft EIS for thorough analysis, study, and comment.

Sincerely,



Sean Parnell
Governor

cc: The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, United States Senate
The Honorable Mark Begich, United States Senate
The Honorable Don Young, United States House of Representatives
Charles A Blanchard, General Counsel, Department of the Air Force
Terry Yonkers, Assistant Secretary, Installations, Environment, and Logistics, Department of the Air Force